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Implementing Weblogs in Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Weblogs or blogs are personalized web pages where individuals can place anything of their liking in the form of text, links, or graphics online. Blogs are usually topic or personality based, and can be used to communicate with practically anyone including friends, colleagues, and departments. Content for a blog is uploaded to a host which could be a website or a software package with blogging features.

Many organizations are finding ways to implement blogs for organizational purposes, both internally and externally. Externally, blogs are used as a tool to communicate and collaborate with suppliers and customers. Internally, blogs are used as a tool to collaborate, manage knowledge, and develop communities. Blogs allow for collaboration between teams and departments, making it easier to plan and schedule meetings. Blogs can also be a way to manage employee's ideas, which can be cataloged for future use. The interactive aspects of blogs assist in developing online communities.

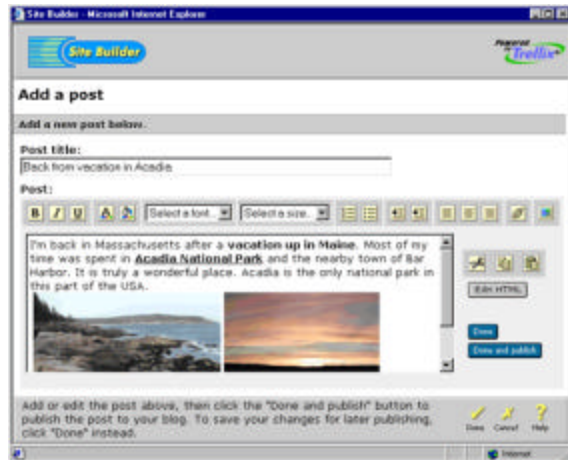
Several issues must be considered when implementing blogs. One must ensure that the blogs are monitored for quality and do not contribute to information overload. With many forms of communication that employees are required to attend to, weblogs may only further contribute to the clutter. Also, some employees have difficulty with the use of online collaboration tools due to their cultural background. Furthermore there are privacy issues that should be addressed. Recommendations are provided to assist in ensuring that blogging efforts are adapted successfully in organizations.

Implementing Weblogs in Organizations

Recently, weblogs have emerged as a new way to communicate and collaborate in organizational settings. Weblogs or blogs are web pages where users post commentary on a subjects ranging from news, to technology, to specific topics. Cross (2002) defines a blog as “a site with dated entries, usually by a single author, often accompanied by links to the weblogs the site’s editor visits regularly” (what’s a blog?, para 2). Unlike a threaded discussion group or a similar tool used to post commentary, updates in blogs can be placed onto the same blog instead of into a new thread. Also, most blogs are updated on a daily basis and allow for immediate feedback so viewers of a blog can easily comment on the blog’s content. Below is an example of how a blog is updated:



An Example of a blog



Enlargement of Updated Section (Trellix, 2002).

The uses of weblogs has grown rapidly and are now being used as a tool to communicate with the public, friends, family, teams, small groups, department, and companies (Ochman, 2002, p. 46; Blogger, 2002, ¶ 4). Through reviewing how blogs are created; organizational applications of blogs; issues surrounding implementation; a critique

on current research; and what types of organizations should use blogs one can make recommendations for the successful implementation of blogs in organizations.

Creation of Blogs:

Blogs are formed through the use of basic Internet language and file transferring programs. There are three ways one can create a blog: through uploading text or graphic-based documents onto a host, downloading software to host a blog, or through the use of a software package. According to Palser (2002), the software packages for weblogs are “dirty cheap” and easy to use (p. 58). The packages range in price from \$900 to \$2,000; however one can use Blogger, which is a service free of charge (Palser, 2002, p. 58). The list of providers that develop these weblogging products include: blogger.com, bigblogger.com, InstaPundit.com, moveabletype.org, userland.com, and weblogger.com. These programs are frequently updated with the latest developments in personal publishing to allow for useful and cross-departmental products. Recent additions have included the inclusion of XML. XML, which stands for extensible markup language, is a computer language allows a company to receive information through its own computer system without needing to print out or transcribe information into another language (Userland, 2002, ¶ 2; Cairncross, 2002, p. 30).

It is possible to build a blog even if the underlying software is not specifically developed to create blogs. Instead of purchasing a specific blog related programs, which include Moveable Type, Manilla, or Trellix Blogging solutions, one could implement blogs through more other products already in use. According to Foley (2002) Microsoft’s products: Share Point Team Services and Sharepoint Portal Services can support blogs due

to their workgroup collaboration and idea sharing components (Foley, 2002, p. 34).

Similarly, Vignette's content management solutions software allows businesses to transfer content between departments for collaboration purposes (Vignette, 2002, ¶ 2).

Organizational Applications of Blogs:

“Businesses can adopt blogs for a variety of external and internal purposes including: customer relations, advertising, promotion, and even internal communication” Kooser, 2002, ¶ 4). However, organizations must first “understand that the major difference between a business weblog and a personal weblog isn't format, but content. Business weblogs tend to focus, naturally, on business issues . . . and often have multiple contributors” (Bausch, Haughey, & Hourihan, 2002, ¶3).

Unfortunately, it is not easy to pinpoint organizational uses of blogs. Many are unaware of the concept of a blog, but use them on a regular basis (Tweeny, 2002, ¶4-6). Intranet weblog use is also not a topic of discussion between organizations, and it is difficult to examine the uses of weblogs behind organizational firewalls (Bausch et al., blogging the intranet, para. 3). “If weblogs were icebergs, what you've seen online are only the tips” (Bausch et al., blogging the intranet, para 3). This is because weblogging potential is largely hidden from view. “Just because you can't see intranet weblogs in action isn't reason to believe they don't exist, or to overlook the tremendous potential of intranet blogging” (Bausch et al., blogging the intranet, para 3).

Several large organizations including Macromedia, Nabisco, Verison, Harley Davidson, and the State of Utah are using blogs as well as thousands of small businesses and non-profits groups. Blogs can be used for several inter-related organizational functions

including: fostering collaboration, community building, knowledge management, monitoring, and resources.

Collaboration

Blogs can increase collaboration through workgroups, project blogs, and individual blogs (Bausch et al., 2002, the collaborative enterprise, para 1). Cross (2001) identifies that collaboration tools, such as blogs, can be key in collaborating interdepartmentally (Cross, 2001, the changing nature of work, para 2). These different types of blogs create a feeling of the organization as a whole as more collaborative. These blogs can assist in developing teams that include customers, partners, and suppliers in other organizations and assist in developing innovative ideas for various projects (Cross, 2001, the changing nature of work, para 4). Cisco Systems is an example of an organization blogs for workgroup collaboration to help develop new solutions to problems, as well an outlet to reflect on work (Oravec, 2002, p. 18).

Employees that have their own personal blogs would allow for collaboration as well. John Robb, President and CEO of UserLand Software Inc., a company that develops blogging technology, envisions that individual workers using blogging tools to write down their thoughts during the course of the day, and reflect upon them in a collaborative way. For example: a doctor might jot down notes of reoccurring symptoms in patients, or an insurance agent may report that a series of similar problems with a certain vehicle model. These daily entries later can be used to identify possible problems, or generate new ideas in the future (Foley, 2002, p. 28-31). “The basic organizational structure of a weblog-they're time-stamped and archived-provides a record of what people are doing and thinking.” (Foley, 2002, p. 30)

Organizations can also collaborate with customers to gain insight on perception of products, to understand the need for improvement. Andrews (2002) documents how Macromedia created blogs surrounding its new MX strategy for Internet services. As a result, “a swarm occurred over the MX rollout, where queries not only got answered but spawned discussions and new ideas. Developers posted new tricks and potential bug alerts, which got linked to by the Macromedia blogs” (Andrews, 2002, ¶ 5).

Cross (2000) identifies that one way bloggers are collaborating is through cross-linking blogs (blogging to learn, para. 4). This is done through linking recent URLs that are relevant to other areas of interest, as well as posting where to find the latest relevant information. The result of this cross-linking is that users feel that progress is made in determining solutions to an issue (Oravec, 2002, p. 48).

According to Webb (2002) asynchronous collaboration tools such as blogs provide advantages in-group collaboration over synchronous platforms. Despite the simplicity of the technology behind blogs, asynchronous collaboration platforms allow time for reflection. By using synchronous platforms to collaborate, organizations may “create a democracy of the loudest and quickest,” while with asynchronous tools people can post ideas several days later, which they might not have thought of on the spot (Webb, 2002, p. 26). These ideas are often more thought out, innovative, and useful than those thought on the spot as well.

Community Building

Blogs can build assist in strengthening offline communities, as well as foster the development of new online communities. These blogging communities can serve a range of purposes, based on the needs of the blogger. If one looks carefully they can even find blogs

on very specific subject matter including: “politics, sex, religion, economics, conspiracy theories, technology, business, ethics, war peace” (Cosgrave, 2002, p. 8). Blogs seem to unite those that, in the past, have nothing in common. Seipp (2002) noted that “Its not the nature of the medium to commission demographic surveys, but I’ve noticed that lawyers, scientists, and . . . media types seem particularly common visitors” (p. 43). Wright (2002) states that it is through blogs that people can perceive others being similar by learning of their interests and ideas. This “ability to bring people with similar backgrounds together is a major strength of on-line communities that administrators should emphasize” (Wright, 2002, p. 206). For this sense of community can strengthen or weaken employee moral, depending on how blogs are managed.

Pruijt (2002) discusses that communicating in online communities is an investment in social capital for the entire group benefits from the information, not just the individual (p. 109). According to Towns, Sauder, Whismant, and Zielinski (2001), online collaboration tools do not only increase social capital, but lead to improved workplace relationships; however this is only when the “electronic community” functions effectively (p. 414). If the users feel the “electronic community” does not provide sufficient support, then there will not be a fluid discussion of ideas (Pruijt, 2002, p. 109). .

Internally, weblogs can be used to help shape employee’s identities. Bausch et al. (2002), even note “The weblog creates a sense of identity for the project team” (project blogs, para 1). Furthermore Pruijt (2002) indicates that computerized support strengthened non-hierarchical bonds, and that knowledge displayed itself collectively, when compared to offline collaboration (p. 110).

Individual blogs can assist in developing relationships between employees. Personal blogs could help unite employees with similar interests. Bausch et al, (2002), note that reading others employee's blogs could be motivating. For example, if all employees could read the blog of a dynamic CEO (individual blogs, para 3). This could help those at different parts of the organization be united through the CEO's purpose.

Blogs can also help extend relationships with customers. In many occasions this is done through posting information regarding the promotion of merchandise, product updates, surveying customers, and offering advice (Surmacz, 2002, ¶ 9). "Instead of annoying customers by emailing them with the latest updates, one could set up a blog, so that interested customers could learn more, while not bothering others" (Cox, 2002, p.1). This would be effective for blogging programs alert bloggers of changes in Weblogs that they indicate they show interest. CNN, Disney, and Slashdot are among companies that already use this to inform customers about products (Cox, 2002, p. 1-2). Andrews (2002) criticizes that these promotional-based blogs, are not clearly labeled as promotional material, and look similar to personal blogs. More disclosure should be required, as to not mislead the users to believe that a community member has set up the blog, but rather that it is part of a corporation's marketing strategy (Andrews, 2002, ¶ 14).

Nevertheless, blogs should be a supplement, not a replacement as a means to communicate with customers. Many people are not aware of a blog or how to use them; however, blogs can create communities that strengthen customer relations.

Knowledge Management

According to Malhorta (2002), organizations often confuse the terms: "knowledge" and "information," leading to a waste of time and money for marginal results. Business

managers need to realize that “knowledge is embodied in people, and knowledge creation occurs in the process of social interaction” (Malhotra, 2002, p. 4). To a degree, knowledge exchange can be managed informally through blogs collaboration and community components. Foley (2002) discusses that for years, “programs such as Lotus Notes have been used as a way to capture employees’ knowledge; however, for several reasons, cultural and technical, the reality has never lived up to the promise” (Foley, 2002, p. 29).

Blogs are an excellent way for organizations to capture knowledge of employees. Known as k-logs, or knowledge blogs, teams can use blogs as a way to brainstorm and store ideas that could be used in the future. Bausch et al., (2002) identify Intranet blogs as a means for managing knowledge management. These knowledge management blogs or k-logs include elements to foster relationships and exchange of ideas. These elements include e-mailing and attachment functions, structured corporate-specific tools, and the ability to post while disconnected. (A k-log conversation with John Robb, para 1-4). These K-logs are an idea for collaboration purposes. Besides reducing paperwork and error, collaboration allows for companies with a variety of skills to cooperate in efficient manners (Cairncross, 2002, p. 34). Gates (2002) feels that these collaboration tools assist in developing cross company relations. They can assist in creating a culture that allows for informed people across an organization to touch base with each other (§ 4). This “cross-stimulation brings on new ideas-and less experienced employees are pulled along to a higher level. The company as a whole works smarter” (Gates, 2002, § 4).

Blogs would fit in with what Malhotra (1999) indicates as a loose-tight knowledge management system (p. 19). “They are loose in the sense that they allow for continuous examination of the assumptions underlying best practices and reinterpretation of this

information” while being “tight in the sense that they also allow for efficiencies based on propagation and disseminations of the best practices (Malhotra, 1999, p. 20). Blogs for this purpose can help store knowledge that can be reviewed to assist in reviewing group processes, and to generate new ideas.

Monitoring

Blogs can be used to monitor information internally and externally within an organization. Externally blogs can be used to monitor customer’s interests. By following personal blogs organizations could track people’s behaviors and use this for marketing purposes. Through read special interest blogs, marketers can generate new ideas for their product line, as well as monitor the perception of their product or service. Also, Ochman (2002) suggests monitoring blogs for public relations purposes. Blogs can be monitored proactively to identify possible issues that affect the company in a negative way. Weblogs can also be used to influence clients, as well as journalists who read blogs and other online resources to come up with ideas for stories (p. 16).

Individuals are using blogs to monitor current events. Newspapers are even starting to “set up topical Weblogs to monitor major stories, summarizing and linking to international and alternative coverage that readers wouldn’t encounter on their own” (p. 59). Journalists are also using these types of blogs. Through reading blogs, foreign correspondents and local reporters can monitor the work of others, and collaborate when needed. This new style of journalism has been known as “emergent journalism” where the reporters “collectively break stories in advance, and produce more insightful analysis than, the media establishment (Cosgrave, 2002, p. 8).

Bloggers are also monitoring the media on their own. Bloggers “point out logical flaws, incorrect facts and occasionally the self-important approach of the reporter” (Seipp, 2002, p. 43). This has caused concern in the journalist community, for many times, these bloggers know the facts better than the reporters, and become furious when newspapers spin stories. The New York Times and the Washington Post have been heavily criticized in this manner.

Internally, managers can look through project blogs as a way to monitor the success or failure of a program. Bausch et al. (2000) indicate that these structured community tools provide a way to monitor how knowledge is transferred and how individual collaborating (how do k-logs differ from general weblogs, para 1). By stepping back and looking at blogs, one can see if a project is working correctly. If a manager views problems, he or she can be proactive and help to correct the project.

Resources:

With links to other blogs, and websites of interest, Blogs can provide valuable and accurate information. According to Oravec (2002) this trend has been called “linkalist” by the journalism community. Many journalists have started their own blogs in addition to working for traditional forms of media. In many instances this is to “showcase for their collected works, and an overflow bin for commentary that could not fit into their allotted inches or minutes” (Palser, 2002, p. 58). However, editors might get concerned about what is posted in journalist’s blogs. Mickey Kaus, a weblog columnist for Slate magazine stated, ‘I’m a little worried that reporters will start to put their best stuff into blogs’ to bypass editors” (Gallagher, 2002, p. 9).

All blogs, however, must be clearly labeled so viewers can determine credibility and independence of the information provided. Just as there are scholarly sources and notable references, there is also fluff and rants of unintelligent individuals (Andrews, 2002, para 13).

Weblogs are among many new resources available to individuals and organizations. According to Block (2002) editors of the professional journals will have to turn to blogs to find out what issues are hot, to expose themselves to a wider range of viewpoints, to prospect for new writers, and to find out where they could enlighten a discussion by commissioning research (p. 52).

John Patrick, the founding member of Global Internet Project and former Vice President of Internet Technology at IBM feels as though blogging may emerge as the primary source of published material (Cainer, S. 2002, p. 1). Seipp (2002) reports that blogging services have been multiplying. InstaPundit, a blog regarding scholarly issues, rose quickly. For a blog that started in August of 2001, it receives between 6,000 and 9,000 hits a day. Some expect for weblogs to become viable resources for research in the future, while others still remain skeptical (p. 42).

Issues to Consider when Implementing Blogs:

Although blogs have much potential in collaboration and community building, several issues must be addressed to ensure that blogging software is a good fit for the organization. These issues include privacy, cultural considerations, information overload, and quality control.

Cultural considerations

The content of weblog technology should be reviewed to ensure that blogs creates an inclusive environment for a diverse workforce. Jenkins (2002), comments that blogs assist in lowering barriers to cultural participation for anyone can create a blog. This equalizing ability of blogs allows for the increase diversification of ideas to be found on the Internet, where as before many of these ideas would not have been heard. (p. 92). With blogs, the user can remain anonymous in terms of race, gender, sexuality, status, or background. Even a set of links to related to specific cultural interest can only infer that the blogger is interested in the topic, not necessarily that of a particular background. Herndon (2002) believes that many feel that this idea of having invisible identities reduces discrimination; but does not necessarily eliminate the possibility. Furthermore in online interaction where people know each other outside the online community, their identities are known (Herndon, 2002a)

Weblog interfaces must be reviewed to ensure that the actual interface is easy to use for diverse users. This can become difficult when users are from different cultures, with different attitudes of technology. Blogging software would be received differently in low context cultures, compared to high context cultures. According to Amant (2002) low-context cultures such as the United States, Germany, and Scandinavia do not have difficulties utilizing online collaboration software. This is mainly due to social norms of detailing all communication in written form. On the other hand, in high-context cultures, such as Japan and countries in Latin America information and communication cannot be easily separated (Amant, 2002, p. 200). It is these high-context cultures that have issues using information online collaboration tools for these programs lack contextual interaction and the participants do not know how interact” (Amant, 2002, p. 200). As a result,

participants “may feel uncomfortable, frustrated, or reserved because without these identify-based context cues, they cannot determine what is acceptable and unacceptable” (Amant, 2002, p. 200). This could lead to those from these cultures not participating in the use of blogs, which in turn, would be disadvantageous to the whole workforce.

Information Overload

Blogs could easily contribute to the already overwhelming number of communication mediums employees are expected to use. With many bloggers providing links to similar information, much of what is posted as well as read could end up being redundant.

Postman (1992) identifies that more issues arise from an overload of information, than the opposite. Postman (1992) feels that new technologies are encouraging this information overload. The American business culture seems to be focused on accessing information, many are driven to fill our lives with the quest to access information that organizations might not necessarily need (p. 60).

Externally, the number of blogs available to browse is increasing dramatically. According to Jenkins (2002), “there are more than 375,000 registered users to Blogger.com alone, with 1,300 more each day” (p. 92). Oravec (2002) feels that this “blogging overload” is a result from the sheer number of blogs. In order to combat this, individuals must become selective as to which blogs they follow; similar to reading certain authors, or watching certain TV shows (Oravec, 2002, p. 618).

On the other hand, Andrews (2002) feels that weblogs could help alleviate information overload. “Companies can get out of users’ mailboxes. Instead of spamming with so called product news and consumer updates, they can “blog” the stuff and let users

who really want the information come on their own volition” (para 6). Oravec (2002) notes that the book marking of important sites, or only reading the current entries could reduce actually reduce information overload (p. 92).

Quality Control

Seipp (2002) identifies quality control as an increasing issue within blogging world (p. 42). Postman (1992) in his book Technopoly discusses one of our “invisible technologies” - language (p. 124). “Unlike television or the computer, language appears to be not an extension of our powers but simply a natural expression of who and what we are . . . it comes from inside us, we believe it to be a direct, unedited, unbiased, apolitical expression of how the world really is” (Postman, 1992, p. 124-125). Humans can use language as they choose to be productive, or unproductive, depending on how the individual seems fit.

According to Cosgrave (2002) search engines such as Goggle, are turning up blogs instead of pertinent information, which some may view as accurate information. “As particular links gain prominence in the blogosphere, their Google rankings climb disproportionately. In some cases blogs themselves, rather than their constituent links, make it all the way to the top” (Cosgrave, 2002, p. 8). Many of these sites are of lower quality, and in many cases just individual opinions on issues that are solely for entertainment purposes. Readers might confuse this information with facts, causing quality and accuracy of reports to diminish.

Also, employees could spend hours reading, writing, and responding to low quality blogs. Wright (2002) indicates that many online environments often deal with off-topic remarks that could not only be distracting to the purpose of the blog, but offensive. It is also

difficult to decide who would be the one to monitor the blogs difficult to find personnel to monitor these discussion boards and to catch every offense (p. 207).

Critique on Current Research:

The concept of a weblog has just arisen within the last few years. Although issues and applications of blogs have been discussed in business publications, journals, and even more recently books, the research on weblogs is still in its fledgling state. Many of the articles published are only predictions or commentary on the uses of blogs.. Many of the articles discuss the application of blogs for educational purposes, or for the journalism community, but not specifically for organizations. Also, the articles surrounding blogs did not relate to theories behind the application, so other journals on a range of topics had to be consulted.

There has not been any research conducted on if participants enjoy collaborating with blogs, or if using blogs is an effective way to collaborate online. Although many articles reference companies that use blogs, they lack a detailed account of how employees feel about using the blogs. In many instances inferences had to be made from research regarding other collaboration tools. Also, research in group collaboration and knowledge management is also difficult to assess. People from diverse cultures might respond differently to weblogs, which would be nearly impossible to predict. Watson, Ho, and Raman (1994) indicate that most research on group support systems software has been conducted within the United States, with Americans as participants (p. 45).

Implementing Blogs in Organizations

The successful implementation of blogs depends on an organization's corporate culture. Organizations that do not give employees control will find blogs to be troublesome to implement. Due to the democratic nature blogs fit easily into the Theory Y perspective of management. According to Eisenberg & Goodall (2001) managers that follow Theory Y views employees as competent and encourages participation in the work environment (p. 78). On the other hand, blogs do not easily into organizations that follow Theory X styles of management, for blogs empower employees and give them a degree of control. Eisenberg and Goodall (2001) indicate that in today's workplace it is extremely important to implement informal systems to conduct business and social activities. These types of systems enhance open dialogue and aide in problem solving. Without them, organizations will not achieve effective job performance (p. 228). Positive job relationships can be developed through the use of blogs as a means to carry them. The more blogs employees' are available to, the more resources an individual may have in solving problems and creating relationships. Blogs would aid in making employees feel as valued members of an organization.

Blogs can also be thought of in a systems context. "Blogs collective functions as a complex adaptive system, with all sorts of feedback loops and emergent properties" (Cosgrave, 2002, p. 8). Bloggers react to organizations, and vice versa. This mutual relationship can generate new ideas. According to Eisenberg & Goodall (2001) "Systems can emphasize the importance of relationships and networks of contacts in allowing groups and organizations to achieve goals that are greater than those of the individual." Also, in a time when organization change occurs rapidly, a systems perspective can help identify

important interdependencies and help the organization survive (Eisenberg & Goodall, 2002, p. 109).

One can monitor the content, but if the individual posts harmful, confidential, or inappropriate information or commentary it could be detrimental to a company, both internally and externally.

Pinnisi and Taves (2002) identify corporation's needs to protect their ideas in the development phase. Since blogs can be instrumental in collaborating on new ideas, measures must be taken to ensure that others cannot see the information. Firewalls and other safeguards should be in place, to ensure that no one can access Intranet files, including blogs. If the blog can be broken into, insight could be given to projects, and patents that a company is working on, costing millions of dollars (Pinnisi & Taves, 2002).

Individuals must also be aware about what they post in their own journals. Many people do realize the implications of how a blog on the net will affect their professional careers. According to Gallagher (2002) one may use blogs as a way to leak information to outsiders (p. 9). Gallagher (2002) documents how Steve Olafson, a reporter for The Houston Chronicle who posted commentary in his blog regarding his job. In his blog, he made fun of the politicians he covered as well as the Chronicle itself. When it was discovered that he was posting this information, "his boss said that he had compromised his ability to do his job" and he was terminated (Gallagher, 2002, p. 9)

Also, LaGuardia and Tallent (2002) indicate that employers are now performing web searches on potential candidates. The information found is read over regardless if it is a professional in nature. These personal blogs often contain users peccadilloes as well as detailed accounts of their drug use, sex life, and personal issues. Many times, candidates

even direct employers to these links and online resumes. In these cases, the employees are not being wary of their personal privacy, and giving too much information away (p. 43).

Recommendations

If an organization's culture is appropriate for blogging technology, the following recommendations will assist in ensuring that the implementation of blogs is successful within your organization.

Programs easy to use:

It is important that all employees can effectively use weblogs, especially in situations for online collaboration. Brown, Dam, Earnshaw, Encaracao, Guedj, Preece, Shneiderman, and Vince (1999) describe that one should address "the gap between what users know and what they need to know to use current systems effectively" (p. 72). Since many still are unfamiliar with the term "weblog" or "blog," information regarding what a weblog is and the uses should be started. Possible training courses might be useful in getting user initially use blogs. Bausch, et al. (2002) even suggest posting content before all users can access the blog. This would make it easier for new users to understand how a blog works (exercise: creating a topic-specific blog for your employer, para 7). If all members that use a blog are not able to use the blogs effectively the blog could be counterproductive.

Culturally Friendly Content

According to Herndon (2002) blogs need to be "non-threatening, interpersonal, and safe." In order for employees to embrace blogging applications, the applications should contribute to an environment where everyone has the opportunity to do their best work. "Designers must be culturally sensitive, and not only for those proficient or familiar with

technology” (Herndon, 2002). One must also be aware that those from different cultures will react differently to posted information. For this reason it is crucial to maintaining an open environment, where users feel free to question each other.

Clear Purpose

The purpose of a blog must be clear. Postman (1993) identifies that information without a purpose can be dangerous. Organizations should decide if a blog has a legitimate business use before implementing them. Blogs can supplement off line communities, and serve as a way to keep members updated of tasks. They can also help develop new online teams to exchange knowledge or to build a team; however, “If the focus is too narrow, there might not be enough content to fill it; too wide, and it might be too vague to be useful” (Bausch et al., 2002).

Review Content Periodically

Management must be able to monitor blogs internally to ensure individuals are respecting blogs. Organizations must still enforce laws to protect against discrimination and harassment within blogging applications. Foley (2002) indicates that countless hours can be spent reading and responding to low-value inputs (p. 28). The organization must set up guidelines to ensure that the content is good. Gallagher (2002) suggests that many companies do not have formal regulations on what can be posted in blogs, due to their newness. Policies should be in place so that if a user is to offend others, selected punishments are in place.

Conclusion:

The possible uses for blogs in organizations are virtually endless; however blogs strengths lie in its collaboration and community building functions. If a corporation’s

culture are conducive to collaboration, blogs will increase communication; however if mismanaged blogs could lead to disruptive communication. Like other technologies, blogs have a place in organizations and should not be seen as a tool to change the organization radically, just assist in improving certain aspects of communication and collaboration.

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